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“To all Booksellers, Country Chapmen, Hawkers and Others”

How the population of East Anglia obtained its printed materials

David Stoker

Introduction

This paper surveys the evidence for different forms of book trade activity taking place in one English region during the early modern period. It considers the various sales and distribution mechanisms for print in the cities, towns and rural areas of the region. These included ‘established’ booksellers together with the itinerant book trades who might visit the regular markets and periodic fairs. There were also special forms of bookselling such as book auctions and occasional events which might draw members of the rural population to the town and which in turn might generate their own literature, such as assize weeks, or public executions. In particular, it seeks to compare the situation existing from about 1570 until the turn of the eighteenth century with the changes that took place during the remainder of that century. The introduction of provincial newspapers into the region, largely between 1701 and 1717, seems either to have been a catalyst for the growth of different forms of bookselling and associated trades in the region, or has at least has resulted in the preservation of more documentary evidence of its activities. Yet, there were also fundamental changes taking place to the economy of the region which were also responsible for the changes.

East Anglia (consisting of the historical counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridge-shire) represents about 9% of the English mainland, and at the turn of the eighteenth century was the most densely populated and economically developed region of the British Isles. Norwich, with a population of around 30,000 in 1700, was easily the largest provincial city and manufacturing centre in England, and the nearby port of Great Yarmouth was then ranked sixth.¹ The university town and inland port of Cambridge and the important seaports of Ipswich, and King’s Lynn would also have featured among the

¹ Penelope Corfield, ‘From second city to regional capital’, *Norwich since 1550*, Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson (eds), (Hambledon & London, 2004), pp. 139-166, p.144 and p.158

20-25 most populous towns in the country.² Bury St Edmund's lay not far behind in size and importance as a social and regional centre and an assize town. The region could also boast two important ecclesiastical centres based on the cathedrals of Norwich and Ely, and about 60 market towns. Eighty-five percent of East Anglians travelled less than ten miles to their nearest market, whereas only 50% of Midlanders could do the same. The average figure for all England was 61%.³,

The region particularly benefited from the long coast line, which defined its eastern and northern boundaries, and its access to the fenland waterways to the west. Three important ports dealt with both coastal trade to London, north-east England and Scotland, and also overseas trade to the Low Countries, Scandinavia and the Baltic. Daniel Defoe who visited King's Lynn in the 1720s, claimed it had "the greatest extent of inland navigation of any English port outside London", providing access to navigable waterways supplying "six counties wholly, and three counties in part".⁴ Heavy goods could therefore be transported by sea or by river to all the major towns in the region.

Although East Anglia was not entirely unscathed by the events English Civil Wars during the 1640s, (being subjected to economic disruption and political turmoil), it saw little military action at this time and suffered far less devastation than most other regions. Thus it was in a better position to begin its economic recovery in the later half of the seventeenth century.

Early bookselling in the region

There is plenty of evidence of book trade activity in the three county towns well before the period under question. The trades of stationer and bookbinder have been recorded in Cambridge from the 13th century, and in Norwich from the 14th century. The first

² Based on the figures in John West, *Town records*. (Chichester, 1983), which places them all in the twenty most populous towns, whereas Corfield uses a different methodology counting contiguous urban areas (e.g. Rochester/Chatham) as one unit.

³ Alan Everitt, 'The marketing of agricultural produce', *The Agrarian history of England and Wales*, vol. 4 edited by Joan Firsk, (Cambridge University Press, 1967, pp. 466-592, p.538.

⁴ Daniel Defoe, *A tour thro' the whole island of Great Britain*. 4th edition, 4 vols. (London:, 1748), I. p.76.

recorded “Booksellers” were in 1502 in Cambridge, during the 1530s in Ipswich, and the 1550s in Norwich.⁵

Because of the needs of the University, the booksellers of Cambridge inevitably operated on a larger scale than their contemporaries elsewhere in the region and there were more of them. Cambridge typically had nine booksellers in business at any time throughout the seventeenth century.⁶ Some of them were able to amass considerable estates valued in many hundreds of pounds. For example William Morden, who traded from 1652 until his death in 1679, left substantial bequests, or William Graves, who with his son traded from 1631 to 1686, left goods and debts to the value of £667⁷ Initially the earnings of the Cambridge booksellers were based on stock holding and retail sales of London and overseas publications, but increasingly towards the end of the century they became involved in the financing and distribution of their own works, either printed locally or else in London. Thus John Creed was able to include a list of seventeen works ‘printed for’ him in 1683 on the final page of one of his works.⁸

Norwich was a significantly larger city than Cambridge, but could only support between four and six booksellers in business at any time during the century. As with those of Cambridge, their businesses varied in size and prosperity. One successful bookseller, Thomas Gilbert, who traded between about 1569 and his death in 1603, left an estate valued at £166 3s 4d including stock and tools of £120. At the other extreme Thomas James, who traded only for seven years until his death in 1629, was able only to amass goods to the total value of £18, of which only £8 came from his stock and tools. During the latter years of the century, booksellers appear to have fared better; thus the inventory

⁵ Based on entries in the *British Book Trade Index* (hereafter BBTI) <http://www.bbti.bham.ac.uk/>.

⁶ Calculated from the BBTI entries for booksellers in each town for the first year in each decade, after removal of duplicated entries.

⁷ David McKitterick, *A history of the Cambridge University Press*, vol. 1. (Cambridge, 1992), pp.367-8, and George Gray and William Palmer, *Abstracts from the wills and testamentary documents of printers, binders, and stationers of Cambridge, from 1504 to 1699*, (London; Bibliographical Society, 1915), pp.118-9, and 124-5.

⁸ John Jewel, *Apologia ecclesiae anglicanae*, (Cambridge, 1683), and McKitterick, pp.367-8.

of William Oliver, who traded between 1662 and 1689, was valued at £451 including stock worth £235 and good debts of £100.⁹

The main obstacle for any new bookseller wishing to set up in business was the capital needed to and acquire the necessary stock. Samuel Selfe, who set up in business in 1700 did so with £200 capital in his own right and £200 worth of stock on credit from London booksellers.¹⁰ It was commonplace for booksellers also to trade as bookbinders. Thus in 1684 William Pinder advertised “all Sorts of Bibles Common-Prayer Books, Testaments, &c. As cheap as any man in Norfolk can sell, and your Books well bound, and claspt, and Money for old Books”.¹¹ He avoided the expense of purchasing his freedom in 1670 by performing services (taking on a poor boy apprentice without any premium and binding books to the value of 20s) for the Mayor's Court.¹²

As with Cambridge, the more successful Norwich booksellers begin to play a part in the publication of small works with a local interest from the second decade of the century, and the numbers of such publications grew rapidly, particularly after 1670. During the 1680s Norwich booksellers such as William Oliver, George Rose, and Edward Giles were able to publish or jointly publish greater numbers increasingly substantial works.¹³ For example, twenty-eight titles were listed in ‘A Catalogue of Books, Printed for and are to be Sold by Edward Giles, Bookseller in Norwich, near the Market Place’, in 1692.¹⁴

Only about seven booksellers are recorded in Ipswich throughout the whole century. One notable bookseller William Weekly was however able to publish a catalogue of five titles in 1655.¹⁵

⁹ Norfolk Record Office, (hereafter N.R.O.) Norwich Consistory Court Inventories, INV 658/3 23 June 1689. See also Ursula Priestley and Alayne Fenner, *Shops and shopkeepers in Norwich 1660-1739*, (Norwich, 1985), pp.19-20.

¹⁰ Lawrence Stone, ‘Libertine sexuality in post restoration England: group sex and flagellation among the middling sort in Norwich in 1706-7’, *Journal of the history of sexuality*, 2 (4), (1992), pp. 511-526, p.512.

¹¹ From a printed advertisement pasted in the back of the Colman Library copy of Alexander Neville's *Norfolk furies* (London, 1623).

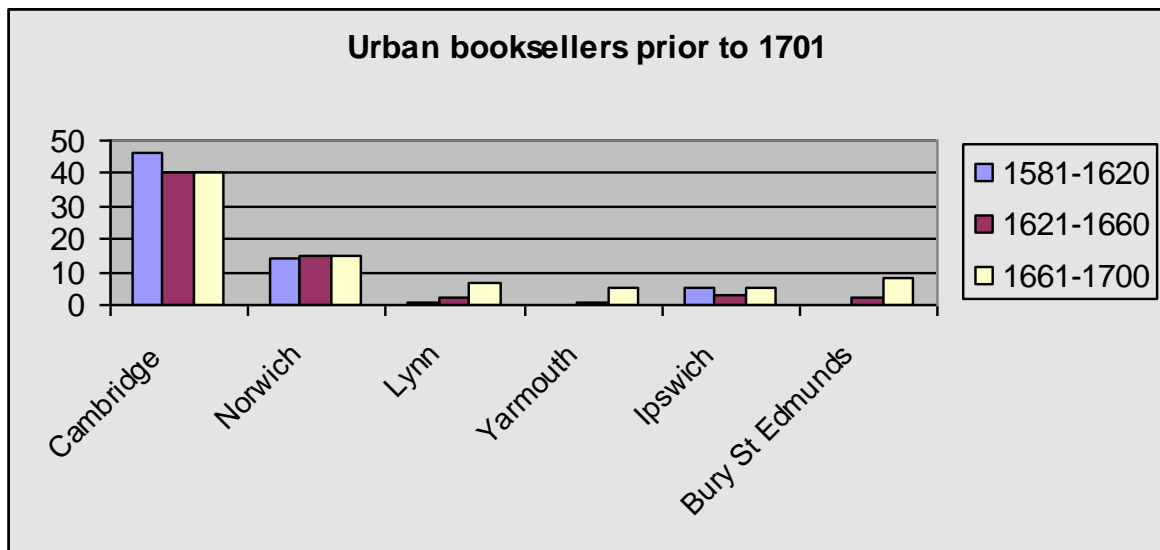
¹² N.R.O. Norwich Mayor's Court Book 26 October 1670.

¹³ David Stoker, ‘Norwich ‘publishing’ in the seventeenth century’, *Printing Places*, edited by John Hinks and Catherine Armstrong, (London, 2005), pp. 31-47.

¹⁴ *A Brief and plain discourse upon the decrees of God*, (London, 1692), pp.8-9.

¹⁵ Included in Alexander Pringle, *Mish`am A stay in trouble or The saints rest in the evil day*, (London, 1657).

During the course of the seventeenth century the trade of bookselling gradually spread from the three county towns to the other significant towns in the region, having been recorded in King's Lynn in 1617, Bury St Edmunds, about 1637, and Great Yarmouth in 1658. In each of these instances the booksellers concerned appear to have been established booksellers operating from shops: men such as Jeremy Bromley of King's Lynn who served an apprenticeship and began his bookselling career in Norwich before moving to Lynn in 1617. After about 1635, he was succeeded by his son Edward who went on to serve as the mayor of the borough.¹⁶ Samuel Woomock is known only as his name is listed as the local distributor of a volume of local sermons published in Bury St Edmunds in 1651,¹⁷ whereas John Tuthill, who purchased his freedom of Yarmouth in 1658, was the undertaker of at least four works by the famous local preacher John Brinsley between 1661 and 1664. He is known to have continued in business until the 1680s, and was succeeded by his son who was in business for at least another decade.¹⁸



Booksellers recorded on BBTI during forty year periods for each of the major towns in the region.

¹⁶ David Stoker 'The Norwich book trades before 1800', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 8, (1981), pp.79-125, p.86.

¹⁷ Edward Willan, *Six sermons*, (London, 1651).

¹⁸ Tuthill is last known circa 1680 when his name appeared on an advertisement for a patent medicine and on *Proposals for the works of Isaac Barrow*, (London, 1682). Zech Tuthill, bookseller of Great Yarmouth was authorized to sell Charles Peter, *New Observations on Venereal Disease*, (London, 1695) (Wing P1683).

The graph above indicates the numbers of recorded bookselling businesses in each of the major towns of East Anglia, over forty years periods between 1580 and 1700.¹⁹ They show that the numbers of businesses remain stable in Cambridge, Norwich and Ipswich, but with some growth in Lynn, Yarmouth and Bury, although starting from a very low base. However the figures for imprints show that the booksellers in the two larger towns were becoming significantly more adventurous in terms of their publishing activities as the century progressed.

The last quarter of the seventeenth century also saw the first evidence of part-time bookselling in some of the market towns - men such as Samuel Burroughs, and Henry Younge, both grocers of Stowmarket who died in 1676 and 1680 respectively, or John Whiting of Lavenham who died in 1686. In each case their probate inventories list primers, grammars, and other books for sale.²⁰ One Bury St Edmund's bookseller, John Marston, is also recorded as having traded in Sudbury in 1685, although it is not possible to be sure that he had a bookshop in the town and may have operated from a market stall.²¹

Other book trade activity prior to 1701

East Anglia also saw some of the earliest printing in England, with the trade introduced to Cambridge in 1505, Ipswich in 1547, and Norwich 1567.²² Yet these were only brief interludes, and it is only after 1583 that printing becomes established in Cambridge when Thomas Thomas was appointed University printer and established a press. At this time there were some twenty-three printing businesses active in London and one in Oxford. In common with most of England, the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk had to wait until the beginning of the eighteenth century, after the lapse of the licensing acts, before printing is

¹⁹ The numbers of business are taken for BBTI, whereas the imprints are those recorded on the *English Short-title Catalogue*. The latter figures include books 'printed for' or 'sold by' local booksellers rather than items 'printed in' a town.

²⁰ Tony Copsey, *Book distribution and printing in Suffolk 1534-1850*, (Ipswich, 1994), pp.34, 104 and 106.

²¹ Henry R. Plomer, *A dictionary of the printers and booksellers who were at work in England, Scotland and Ireland from 1668 to 1725*, (London: 1922), pp.198-9.

²² See McKitterick, *A history of the Cambridge University Press*, William Sessions, *The first printers at Ipswich in 1547-1548 and Worcester in 1549-1553*, (York, 1984), and David Stoker, 'Anthony de Solempne: attributions to his press', *The Library - Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, 6, ser. 3, (1981), pp.17-32.

established on a permanent basis. The work of the Cambridge printers in the century and half before the University decided to establish its own press in 1696 has been recorded in detail elsewhere.²³ Much of this story relates to their struggles to assert the right to print profitable works such as the *Bible*, in addition to the more academic work. Cambridge printers undertook some local jobbing work and also produced almanacs during the seventeenth century, but they did not take part in the printing of ballads, news books, or more sensational popular works that were the staple reading matter of most people in the in the region.

The trade of bookbinder was relatively poorly rewarded compared to that of bookseller but required far less capital to start up in business. Sixteenth and seventeenth century bookbinders often aspired to become booksellers and those who continued to practise the trade alone were usually poor men. For example, Anthony Nicholson of Cambridge who despite having succeeded his father and practised between 1666 and his death in 1680. left an inventory valued at only £2 12s 8d.²⁴ Yet Michael Crotch traded only as a bookbinder in Norwich between 1631 and at least 1664, and one his sons John was still trading well into the eighteenth century.²⁵ Individual bookbinders begin to be listed in the market towns of East Anglia from the end of the seventeenth century, although at times it is only on the basis of a single inscription in a binding - such as John Tompson of Harlestone in 1694.²⁶ Binders might also be employed to visit a particular private collection. When in April 1687 Sir Nicholas L'estrangle of Hunstanton Hall wanted his pamphlets to be bound, rather than take them to Lynn or Norwich, he agreed with the binder Francis Bush to work at his house at 8s per week "my self to find all materialls ex[ce]pt the stiching press & such tooles he ownes".²⁷

Papermaking was introduced to Barnwell near Cambridge in the 1550s, close to the site of Stourbridge fair, although there is no evidence that the paper was ever used by the

²³ Notably in McKitterick, *A history of the Cambridge University Press*.

²⁴ Gray and Palmer, pp.121-2.

²⁵ Stoker, 'The Norwich book trades', pp.97-8.

²⁶ Tompson is named as the binder of a *Bible* in the N.R.O (PD 119/182).

²⁷ N.R.O, LEST Q38, f.1. Bush eventually stayed at Hunstanton for seven and a half weeks during which time he stitched and bound in vellum 60 quarto volumes and stitched two folios. His wages came to £3 and he used 17 vellum skins at 11d each.

local printers and the mill was disused by the mid seventeenth century.²⁸ It was not until after the mid 1690s that the trade was re-established at Castle Rising and Taverham in Norfolk and a decade later in Suffolk at Sudbury and Long Melford.²⁹ By the end of the 18th century there were 24 mills in the region with plenty of evidence of the manufacture of printing and writing papers.

The Itinerant book traders

Since there is no certain evidence that established and dedicated bookshops existed outside the main towns in the region during the seventeenth century it is also necessary to consider other sales mechanisms such as the regular markets, the periodical fairs and the role of the itinerant book trade. The term ‘itinerant trade’, refers to the extensive distribution system for printed materials which existed outside the established bookshops, including those who travelled across the country between fairs and markets, or else were otherwise involved in the logistical or communication industries. The various distribution mechanisms for printed book matter during the seventeenth century were listed in Roger L’Estrange’s *Considerations and proposals in order to the regulation of the press*, in 1667. He began by identifying the established tradesmen, “the Printers themselves, stitchers, binders, and stationers”, but went on to include a host of itinerant traders “hawkers, mercury-women, pedlars, ball-singers, posts, carriers, hackney-coachmen, and mariners.”³⁰ The last few of these trades may seem some distance from bookselling, but it is noteworthy from the evidence obtained during investigations into the distribution of seditious literature that men such as mariners or carriers might be involved in their distribution.

In spite of the absence of black-letter ballads printed in the region, there was doubtless a healthy trade in their sale from at least the mid 16th century until the end of the seventeenth century.³¹ The only real evidence of the extent of this trade comes in a report

²⁸ McKitterick, *A history of the Cambridge University Press*, p.456.

²⁹ David Stoker, 'The early history of papermaking in Norfolk', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 36, (1976), pp.241-252.

³⁰ Roger L’Estrange, *Considerations and proposals in order to the regulation of the press*, (London, 1667).

³¹ The only surviving exception was an execution broadside *Certayne versis writtene by Thomas Brooke ... the daye before his deathe, who sufferyd at Norwich, the 30. of August 1570*, (Norwich, 1570). Anthony de Solempne’s press in Norwich ceased working soon afterwards.

of a dispute between Robert Scott of Norwich who is otherwise known as a grocer, but appears to have been supplying members of the itinerant trade. and Abraham Veale a wholesale stationer in London. The case heard in the Court of Common Pleas concerned non-payment for materials supplied to him between July 1568 and November 1570, and Scott's purchases were listed in the proceedings. These included thousands of "Odas vocatur Ballades" in addition to hundreds other small books including almanacs, primers, horn books, plays and jest books.³²

Ballads would typically be sold by itinerant ballad singers who would travel from town to town performing the songs and selling printed copies. Tessa Watt has published some of the evidence relating to the existence of such people from the Norwich Court books prior to 1640.³³ However there is also plenty of evidence from the end of the century. Thus in 1681 John Taylor of Aye in Suffolk and his wife produced a licence from the Master of the Revells to sing and sell Ballads.³⁴ In 1690 Robert Woollans and Henry Martyn were allowed to "sing read and sell ballads for the space of a week behaving themselves civilly", and Richard Welly and his wife were allowed to sing ballads and sell pamphlets for 14 days "at the pump in the market and not elsewhere".³⁵

The subject matter for these ballads included: murders, executions, monstrous births, disasters, battles, miraculous occurrences, and unrequited love. Many titles are now known only from titles recorded in the Stationers Company Registers, such as 'A dolefull discourse of a lamentable spoile done by ffyer in the town of East Dereham' in 16**, or 'God's mercy showed to the poor at Orford and Aldborough in Suffolk shewing the soden growth of peaze upon a sea rock, 1596. Even those listed in the Stationers' Registers probably represent only a small proportion of those actually produced. There

³² Public Record Office (P.R.O), CP 40/1297 membrane 1668. The case was briefly described by H.R. Plomer in 'Some Elizabethan book sales', *The Library*, 1916

³³ Tessa Watt, 'Publisher, pedlar, pot-poet: the changing character of the broadside trade, 1550-1640', in Robin Myers and Michael Harris (eds), *Spreading the word: the distribution networks of print 1550-1850*, (Winchester, 1990), pp.61-81, p.70.

³⁴ N.R.O. Norwich Mayor's Court Book 25 (1677-1695) f.85.

³⁵ Ibid ff. 264, and 272.

are also a few survivals however such different accounts of a fire at Beccles in Suffolk in 1586, each of which has the imprint of a Norwich bookseller Nicholas Colman.³⁶

A pedlar sold small goods including printed pamphlets on foot, whereas a hawker sold them from horseback or from a horse and cart. The difference is sometimes noted in the records. Thus in 1679 in Norwich Laurence White was allowed to “Read and Sell pamphlets on horse-backe until next Wednesday next”.³⁷ However the terms were also used interchangeably.

The trade of chapman is likewise frequently noted in the records as a collective term for pedlars, hawkers and other itinerant merchants. The Oxford English Dictionary defines chapman as “A man whose business is buying and selling; a merchant, trader, dealer” as well as a pedlar, and their wares were by no means limited to printed materials.³⁸ Very little is known about everyday operation of these itinerant traders. There were of course publishing firms in London which specialised in supplying this trade, but how they operated, and what if any role of the regional booksellers in the supply and distribution networks is not clear.

There is also conflicting evidence as to the extent of this trade in East Anglia at the end of the seventeenth century. There are several East Anglian chapmen recorded on the *British Book Trade Index*, but it is by no means certain that they were necessarily associated with the sale of reading matter. Margaret Spufford, in her study of 17th century popular fiction analysed the numbers of pedlars licences issued in 1697 and found to her surprise that relatively few licenses were issued in East Anglia compared with other areas of

³⁶ Thomas Deloney, *A proper newe sonet declaring the lamentation of Beckles a market towne in Suffolke*, (London, 1586) and D. Sterrie, *A brieve sonet declaring the lamentation of Beckles, a market towne in Suffolke which was in the great winde upon S. Andrewes eve*, (London, 1586).

³⁷ N.R.O. Norwich Mayor's Court Book 25 (1677-1695) f.37.

³⁸ The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* has chapman as synonymous with pedlar, and *Chambers Dictionary* defines the term as an itinerant dealer or pedlar. These definitions correspond with Cotsgrove's *Dictionary of the French and English Tongues*, (London, 1611), which defines a chapman as “a paultrie pedlar, who in a longe packe or maunde (which he carries for the most part open and hanging from his necke before him) hath Almanacks. Bookes of News, and other trifling ware to sell”. However, technically these definitions refer to ‘petty chapman’. Some of the chapmen whose wills are recorded in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury or the Norwich Consistory Court were far from being “paltry pedlars”. Similarly some of the calculations in the ready reckoners printed in *The English chapman's and traveller's almanack* at the end of the seventeenth century imply that chapmen might be buying and selling on a far greater scale than might be encompassed in a pedlar's pack.

England.³⁹ This observation is supported by the lack of survivals of such works printed in the region, or with the names of East Anglian distributors, before the turn of the eighteenth century. There are a few references to itinerant book tradesmen other than ballad sellers in the records of the Norwich Mayor's Court but these relate to the suppression of vagrancy rather than allowing it to happen. Thus "John Tonge, a seller of Almanacs taken vagrant in this city is ordered forthwith to depart and not to return to make the like sale within this city at any time hereafter" in January 1634.⁴⁰

Where there is evidence of a thriving itinerant book trade is in the earliest newspaper advertisements during the first two decades of the 18th century. Thus within two weeks of setting up his shop in Norwich in 1706 the printer Henry Crossgrove was advertising:

To all Booksellers, Country Chapmen, Hawkers, and others, this is to give notice that they may at the Printing Office in Magdalen Street, in a short time be furnisht with all manner of little Novels, Histories, Poems, Romances, Story-books, Riddle-Books, Song-Books, Jest books, Broad-sides, and Ballads, they shall all be printed on good Paper and a very fair Character, and sold very Reasonably, especially to those who shall buy to sell again.⁴¹

Likewise Crossgrove's rival Elizabeth Burges advertised

all sort of history-Books, Song-Books, Broad-sides &c. There may also be had, Devotions for the Holy Communion. Price one penny. Likewise may be had a Book entitul'd a path-way to heaven: or, a sure way to happiness under the following heads, viz. of Death, Heaven, Hell, Judgement, and very weighty Considerations of eternity. Price one penny. The true description of Norwich, both in its antient & modern state, gather'd from the choicest Manuscripts and Authentick Records with a list of Mayors and Sheriffs from the first to these present ones, being the most perfect one that ever was printed in that Nature. Price one Penny.⁴²

Such evidence as there is of the involvement of logistical traders such as carriers, mariners and posts in the distribution of printed publications comes from court records and is related to exceptional circumstances, such as the suppression of "seditious publications" in 1630s, and may not therefore be typical. One example is when a cargo of so called seditious publications was found on the ship "Jewel" in Yarmouth harbour

³⁹ Margaret Spufford, *Small books and pleasant histories*, (Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp.118-9.

⁴⁰ N.R.O. Norwich Mayor's Court Book 16 (1624-1634) f.462.

⁴¹ *Norwich Gazette*, 3, 21 December 1706.

⁴² *Norwich Post*, 257, 3 May 1707. John Bagnall the first printer in Ipswich likewise advertised in the *Ipswich Journal* for 21 January 1721 in similar terms.

having been imported from Rotterdam.⁴³ Investigations into the circulation of William Prynne's controversial publication *Newes from Ipswich* during 1637 identified a number of named individuals including one puritan minister,⁴⁴ but whether the remainder were part of the regular book trade is open to doubt.

The rudimentary postal service was an important element in the distribution network to the market towns and villages, and Henry Crossgrove sought to recruit such men to carry his newspaper.⁴⁵ The importance of the postal service in the distribution of news and other current publications was shown by the complaints made by the three Norwich tradesmen in March 1656 (at least two of whom were established booksellers) concerning the substantially increased costs of receiving small packets of news and the decline in reliability of the service.⁴⁶

After the Restoration, Roger L'Estrange was awarded a monopoly on the publication of printed news, which had the effect of encouraging the growth of manuscript newsletters, which were distributed in the region by the postal service. What little evidence there is of the existence and popularity of newsletter comes from the larger towns. Thus Sir Thomas Browne of Norwich makes frequent reference to news letters in his correspondence, on one occasion refers to them as the "coffe and common newes letters" as they circulated

⁴³ *Privy Council Registers, preserved in the Public Record Office*, 12v. (London, 1967-8), ii. pp.385, 442.

⁴⁴ *Calendar of state papers, domestic series, of the reign of Charles I*, 23 vols. (London 1858-1897), 10. (1636/7), pp.427 and 487, and J. Browne *The history of Congregationalism in ... Norfolk ... and Suffolk* (Norwich, 1877), pp.95-97.

⁴⁵ "If any Post-men, or letter carriers have a desire to sell the Weekly News in any Market-Towns or Villages in their respective Walks, they may be furnisht with the Norwich Gazette on very advantageous terms". *Norwich Gazette* 2, 14 December 1706.

⁴⁶ N.R.O. Norwich Mayor's Court Book 23 (1654-1666), f.28.

This daye Mr Nicholas Browne doth enforme that he Frequently have occasion to send letters & small packetts of writinge to London & to receive the like from thence agayne doth generally paye double so much since the present poust that is now imployed between Norwich & London was set up & that he hath payde for a small box of writing Five shillings which formerly he did not paye above twelve pence for the like box & that he likewise payde for some writing bound up in a paper iijs the like to which he formly bought for xijd or under. Nicholas Browne

John Spratt Bookeseller doth likewise enforme that he doth generally paye double & more mony for any carage by poast that now is then he did to former poasts neyther can he have such parcels brought many times as he hath neede of although he doth paye some times iijs & some times vs for such as are brought when as formerly he had the like for iis. Jo Spratt

Willm Francklyn Bookeseller doth. likewise enforme that he hath payde for a parcell of newes bringeing from London by the present poast iijs., which parcell cost him then but iijs ijd & that he usually before times did paye for the like parcel but viijd & that he usuaily doth now paye xvijjd & some times ijs for such parcells as formerly cost him not above vjd. William Franckling.

in coffee houses.⁴⁷ The Norwich bookseller William Nowell was involved in the production and distribution of newsletters in the 1660s both in supplying local news to the newsagents in London and also in supplying copies to the local authority.⁴⁸ On more than one occasion the Norwich town clerk attempted to censor their contents.⁴⁹

East Anglian Markets and Fairs

The commercial activities of both itinerant and established book traders usually centred on the many markets and fairs in the region, as these provided a place for open yet regulated retail trade, rather than private bargaining. Records of the presence of itinerant tradesmen at fairs and markets prior to the eighteenth century are very hard to find, other than in the largest centres. However, from the middle decades of the seventeenth century, the addresses of provincial booksellers begin to be given in the imprints of some local publications or in occasional printed advertisements. Where these specify a location within a town, a large proportion make reference to the local market place.

A market may be defined as a central place for the regular sale of goods and services from the surrounding area. As such, they are primarily outlets for local produce, compared with fairs which frequently attracted tradesmen from a much wider area. There was a wide range of different sized markets, some with specialisms, such as Fish, oysters, meat, butter, hay, horses, leather, fabrics depending upon the situation of the town and the size and of the local population. Markets have existed in England from before Roman times, and during the 17th century there were about 75 markets taking place each week in the three East Anglian counties. Every major town in the region had its market place or places, and also markets were held in many smaller 'market towns' the presence of which distinguished them from surrounding villages. Most markets were held weekly, but in the larger towns they might be held semi-weekly or more often. Ipswich had five markets each week for different products. Bury St Edmund's had four separate market held at different locations for the sale of horses, butter and fish, cattle as well as the Great

⁴⁷ British Library, (B.L.) Sloane Ms. 1847 f. 137, and Sir Thomas Browne, *Works*, iv, p.119.

⁴⁸ *Calendar of state papers, domestic series, of the reign of Charles II*, 28 vols. (1860-1938), 6., 29 September 1666, and N.R.O. Norwich Mayor's Court Book 23 (1654-1666), f.202, 31 October 1663.

⁴⁹ R. Hill, *The correspondence of Thomas Corrie*, (Norwich, 1956), p.12.

Market for other produce.⁵⁰ Some of the smaller markets might be held fortnightly or only at times when a particular product was in season such as the Burnham Oyster Market.

By far the largest market in the region, and indeed in provincial England, during the seventeenth century was that held twice weekly at Norwich. Norwich market dates from Saxon times, although the present site, described in the 1740s by Francis Blomefield as “the grandest market-place” and “the best single market in all England”, was established by the Normans⁵¹. An illustration, taken from a watercolour by John Cotman in the first decade of the nineteenth century shows the market largely as it was throughout the previous two centuries except for the absence of an elaborate Market Cross which was demolished in the 1730s.⁵² This structure seems to have been a place where ballad singers and other itinerant trades were permitted to sell their wares. The large market place was organised according to trades or produce on sale, but there are no records of any members of the book trades selling from stall.⁵³ However one bookshop is visible on Cotman’s illustration, that of William Booth, on the upper walk adjacent to the market place, in a row of shops that appears to have been continually occupied by at least one bookseller’s business at least from the beginning of the seventeenth century.

A fair is a periodical gathering of buyers and sellers, in a place and at a time ordained by charter or statute or by ancient custom. Although primarily commercial in origin, fairs would often include shows and other social entertainments. In addition to local tradesmen, they would frequently attract traders from throughout the country, as foreigners would be permitted to trade at the fair whereas there might be restrictions at the market. They might last a day or two, or for the more important fairs two weeks or more. During the seventeenth century potential traders would be informed of their existence and dates in trade directories such as *The chapmans and travellers almanack*,

⁵⁰ St. Edmundsbury District Council ‘The History of Bury St Edmunds Markets’, <http://www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk/sebc/visit/markethistory.cfm>.

⁵¹ Francis Blomefield, *An essay towards a topographical history of Norfolk*, 5. vols. (Fersfield, Norwich and Lynn, 1729-1775), ii, p.647.

⁵² A lithograph by H. Ninham, based on Cotman’s water colour is reproduced in Ursula Priestley, *The great market*, (Norwich, 1987), p.18.

⁵³ Priestley, *The great market*, p.8.

which claimed to contain a list of all the fairs in England, Scotland and Ireland.⁵⁴ The exact number of fairs taking place at any one time in the region is difficult to determine since different sources give significantly different numbers as country fairs might come and go. According to the *Jarrolds almanac* for 1822 there were 204 fairs per year in 148 towns and villages in Norfolk and Suffolk alone. Many towns and even some villages might have two or three fairs per year.

There were many important fairs in the region including those held at Ely, St Faith's (near Norwich), Great Yarmouth (herring fair), and Lynn. For most of these instances there is little evidence of book trade activity, although the records of the Beccles fair do contain a reference to a chapman and bookseller renting a stall.⁵⁵ In addition to these, there were also two fairs of national, if not international, significance which were held in the region each year, those at Stourbridge near Cambridge and Bury St Edmunds

Bury Fair was renowned for the sale of luxury items: a contemporary description noting: "Several rows of haberdashers, milliners, mercers, jewellers, silversmiths and toy shops"⁵⁶. It was also noted for its gaiety. The entry in *Magna Britannia* in 1721 described it as "famous all over England, not so much for merchandises as for the company".⁵⁷ It even had a well-known country dance named after it.⁵⁸ John Macky visited in the early years of the eighteenth century:

The Fair lasts a Fortnight, and all the neighbouring Nobility and Gentry come there every afternoon, where they divert themselves in Raffling till it is time to go to the Comedy, which is acted here every Night; and afterwards go to the Assemblies, which are always in some Gentleman's House or other, during the Fair. I must own I never saw a fairer Assembly of Beauties in any Part of the World than at this Fair; which seldom concludes without some considerable

⁵⁴ *The Chapmans and travellers almanack*, (London, 1693-5), other examples included *The English chapmans and traveller's almanack....* (London, 1702). or *The traveller's and chapman's daily instructor*: (London, 1705).

⁵⁵ Spufford, *Small books and pleasant histories*, pp.118-9.

⁵⁶ Charles Caraccioli, *An historical account of Sturbridge, Bury, and the most famous fairs in Europe and America*; (Cambridge, [1773?]), p.16.

⁵⁷ Thomas Cox, *Magna Britannia et Hibernia, antique et nova*, 6 vols., ([London] 1720-7), v., pp.253-4.

⁵⁸ *The dancing-master: or, directions for dancing country dances*, 17th. ed. (London, 1721), p. 207.

Matches or intreagues: And indeed it is more a Market for Ladies than Merchandizes.⁵⁹

The same preoccupation with match making and dangerous liaisons also appears in a contemporary poem

Where Suffolk claims the circumjacent Fields,
And pleasing sites and beauteous Prospects yield;
There stands a Town, Bury St Edmond's nam'd,
Much for its Men, more for its Women fam'd;
This place for such Increase is so renown'd,
That for five Beaus, ten lovely Belles are found;
Th' unequal lot down thro' the Vulgar runs,
And thrice ten Dorothys for twenty Johns.⁶⁰

The atmosphere of the fair at the end of the 17th century, with many different tradesmen crying out their wares, and the disreputable behaviour of some its visitors is described in Thomas Shadwell's play *Bury fair* in 1689. However the only reference in the text to printed matter is when two Jack Puddings or Jesters hand out papers advertising:

A most delicious dainty monster, the most delightful monster, the prettiest monster ever was seen! The most admirable! The most incomparable monster!

Despite its reputation and patronage by nobility, Bury Fair could not rival Stourbridge or Stirbitch Fair, which Daniel Defoe considered it to be the Greatest in World. Stourbridge was a mediaeval fair, held in a field adjacent to the river Stour, a tributary of the river Cam on the edge of Cambridge. By the 15th century it was of national rather than regional significance due to its strategic importance in the network of inland waterways. Attracting both the wholesale and retail trades. Barges transported goods to and from the fair ground via King's Lynn to other parts of the United Kingdom. By end of 17th century fair at its height as a commercial event, and it is believed to be the model for Bunyan's 'Vanity Fair' in the Pilgrim's Progress. Contemporary descriptions talk of vast quantities of crops, wool, textiles, and animals traded. In addition there were large

⁵⁹ John Macky, *A journey through England*. 4th. ed. 2 v. (London, 1724), i. pp.27-81.

⁶⁰ *Bury Fair*, (London, 1721).

numbers of luxury trades including Milliners, cabinet makers, perfumers, and toymen.⁶¹ As with Bury Fair, Stourbridge was an important social as well as an economic event, although in Macky's opinion, it did not compare with Bury "for Beauties, or the fineness of Company; although it much surpassed it in Cattle and Other Merchandizes".⁶² Other descriptions refer to vast quantities of crops, wool, textiles, and animals traded.

The satirist Ned Ward, writing in his *Step to Stir-Bitch-Fair* in 1700 gives a detailed account of the fair at this time;

Stir-Bitch-Fair, where Vice, Merchandise, and Diversion, draw the Cambridge-Youth, London-Traders, Lyn-Whores, and abundance of Ubiquitarian-Strolers, into a promiscuous Assembly, all contributing something to either the Pleasure or Profit of one another; some coming to spend Money, others to get it:

... such a Number of Wooden Edifices, and such a Multitude of Gentry, Scholars, Tradesmen, Whores, Hawkers, Pedlars, and Pick-pockets, that it seem'd to me like an Abstract of all sorts of Mankind, drawn into a lesser Body, to show the World in Epitomy.⁶³

Stourbridge Fair was also known for the sale of books, although England had nothing to compare with the great European book fairs at Frankfurt and Leipzig, to which booksellers from all over the continent would travel. Booksellers from both London and Cambridge are known to have traded at the fair from mid 16th century and probably before. At the end of the 17th century John Dunton spoke of the London bookseller William Shrewsbury as being a regular attendee at the fair and the only bookseller that "understands FAIR-KEEPING to any advantage."⁶⁴ Likewise Ned Ward spoke of

... a Place call'd originally Cooks-Row, but now more properly Cuckolds-Row, from the great Number of Booksellers that are now crept into Possession of their Greasinesses Division; this Learned part of the Fair is the Schollars chief Rendezvouz, where some that have Money come to buy Books, whilst others who want it, take 'em slily up, upon Condition to pay if they're catch'd, and think it a

⁶¹ A detailed account of the fair in the late sixteenth century is given in M.C., Siraut, *Some aspects of the economic and social history of Cambridge under Elizabeth I.*, University of Cambridge M.Litt. thesis, 1978.

⁶² Macky, *A journey through England*, i. pp.138-9.

⁶³ Edward (Ned) Ward, *Step to Stir-Bitch-Fair with remarks upon the University of Cambridge*, (London, 1700), p.3.

⁶⁴ John Dunton, *The life and errors of John Dunton late citizen of London*, London, 1705), p.299.

Pious piece of Generosity, to give St. Austin or St. Gregory Protection in a Gown Sleeve till they can better provide for 'em.⁶⁵

A plan of the fair ground, drawn about twenty years later, shows that the booksellers still had a specific area to themselves close to the main road, then known as 'Booksellers Row'.⁶⁶

Early East Anglian Book Auctions

The first recorded book auction in the region was held at an inn at Trumpington near Cambridge in May 1686 organised by the London bookseller Enoch Wyer.⁶⁷ Later in the same year, that "most famous Auctioneer of all Great as well as Little Britain" Edward Millington held the first of a regular series of auctions at Bury and Stourbridge Fairs continuing into the eighteenth century.⁶⁸ Edward Millington likewise began to organise auctions in some of the larger towns of the region, either at local bookshops as in Norwich in 1689 and 1693 or else in Coffee Houses as in Lynn in 1694.⁶⁹

Ned Ward gives an amusing account of, Millington who "sells Books by the Hammer, and gives the Scholars as merry an Entertainment, as a Mountebank and his Andrew".

Here's an Old Author for you, Gentlemen, you may Judge his Antiquity by the Fashion of his Leather-Jacket; herein, is contain'd, for the Benefit of you Scholars, the Knowledge of every thing; written by that famous Author, who thro' his Prosound Wisdom, very luckily discover'd that he knew nothing? For your Encouragement, Gentlemen, I'll put him up at two Shillings, advance 3 Pence; Two Shillings once: What no Body bid? The Bidder advances 3d. Two and 3d. once: Gentlemen, Fye for shame, why sure Men of your Parts and Learning, will never suffer the Works of so famous an Author to be thus undervallued: If you'll believe me, Gentlemen, he's worth more to a Powder-Monkey to make Cartridges of, than what's bid: Two and three pence twice? What no Body amongst you

⁶⁵ Ward,, *Step to Stir-Bitch-Fair* p.15.

⁶⁶ *Bibliotheca topographica Britannica*, v. (London, 1790).

⁶⁷ *A catalogue of choice books* ([London], 1686), ESTC T64485.

⁶⁸ John Lawler, *Book auctions in England*, (1898), **. Several of the catalogues are recorded in ESTC..

⁶⁹ *A catalogue of valuable books ... which will be sold by auction (or who bids most) for the benefit and entertainment of the clergy, gentry and citizens living in and about the city of Norwich, at Mrs. Elizabeth Oliver's house on Monday the 16th of December, 1689*, (London, 1689), *A catalogue of ancient and modern books... which will be sold by Auction... at Mrs Olivers House, on Monday the tenth of July 1693*. (London, 1693) and *A catalogue of ancient and modern books ... Which will be sold by auction (or who bids most) for the diversion and entertainment of the gentlemen of the town, country, and inhabitants of Kings-Lynn, at Mr Ferroure's coffee-house at the Turks-head in the Highstreet on Monday the 26 of March. 1694*. By Edward Millington of London, bookseller, (London, 1694).

Gentlemen of the Black Robe, that has so much respect for the Wisdom of our Ancestors, as to advance t'other 3d? Well Sir, I find you must have him at two and three pence, Knock, and now you've bought him: Sir I must tell you, you'll find Learning enough within him, to puzzle both Universities: And thus much I promise you further Sir, when you have read him seven years, if you don't like him, bring him to me again, in Little Brittain, and I'll help you to a Man shall give you a Shilling for him, to cover Band-Boxes. At this sort of rate he banters the young Students; and whatever they purchas'd, gave 'em a Jest into the Bargain.⁷⁰

Millington's annual Book Auctions at Stourbridge might last for a week or more; those at Bury Fair were not so large but seem to have also featured sales of luxury goods as well, in keeping with the different nature of the event. One Bury auction in 1689 included the sale of roses, perfumes, together with "Hungary water, chocolata, best Spanish snuff, essences, and all sorts of powder for the hair".⁷¹

Economic Changes in 18th century England

The eighteenth century was a period of economic growth in England, particularly during the first and third quarters, as a precursor to the Industrial Revolution. The first half of the century saw the development of an economic infrastructure including financial services such as credit and banking together with a growth in overseas trade. There were also significant improvements in both road and water communications.⁷² Levels of literacy and general education among the populace also increased markedly. These changes were most apparent in the provinces where, as a result of increased prosperity, there was a development of retail trading, the increased sale of luxury goods and the introduction of new occupations. It was in this context that there was a considerable growth in established bookselling and later printing in the provinces, coupled with a relative decline in the significance of the itinerant trades

There had been a noticeable growth in the numbers and longevity established booksellers in the major towns of the East Anglian region during the final decade and a half of the

⁷⁰ "Step to Stir-Bitch-Fair, pp.15-6.

⁷¹ For example, *A collection of choice books, viz. in divinity, history, voyages, travels, romances, plays, together with artificial rarities,... will be sold by auction ... at St. Edmonds-Bury Fair on Monday the 23d of September 1689... by Edward Millington* ([London], 1689).

⁷² See Nicholas Barker, 'The rise of the provincial book trade in England and the growth of a national transport system', Frédéric Barbier, Sabine Juratic, et Dominique Varry, (eds), *L'Europe et le livre: réseaux et pratiques du négoce de libraire XVIe – XIXe siècles*, (Paris, 1996), pp.137-155.

seventeenth century, it was the period between 1701 and 1720 that particularly marks a watershed. These developments would spread in to the market towns during the middle decades of the century, inevitably impacting upon the itinerant traders. Two of the catalysts for these change was the introduction of printing to the region (outside of Cambridge), which took during these years, and, in particular the growth of provincial newspapers. The growth of newspaper publishing appears to have happened far more rapidly in East Anglia than in other parts of the country. Of the thirty-eight English provincial newspaper titles listed by R.M. Wiles before 1720, ten were from East Anglia.⁷³

The Spread of Printing

Printing was re-introduced to Norwich by in Francis Burges September 1701, and after nearly 130 years. Two months later he commenced printing the *Norwich Post*, which is usually acknowledge as the earliest provincial newspaper.⁷⁴ Within five years there were three presses and as many newspaper in the city.⁷⁵ Printing had spread to Bury St Edmunds around 1711 when William Thompson and Thomas Bailey, two printers from Stamford, set up a press.⁷⁶ By 1717 they were publishing a newspaper, the *Suffolk Mercury*. Likewise John Bagnall set up a printing office in Ipswich in 1717 followed by his newspaper the *Ipswich Journal* in 1720. It was not however until the mid 1740s that the printers of Cambridge considered with worthwhile to establish a newspaper.⁷⁷

Thereafter the growth of the new trade in the region was noticeably slower. The next commercial printing in the region was probably at King's Lynn , where William Garratt, formerly a bookseller from Boston Lincolnshire, established a small jobbing press about

⁷³ See the Appendices B and C in R.M. Wiles, *Freshest advices: early provincial newspapers in England*, (Columbus, Ohio, 1965). This figure includes two "Great Yarmouth" editions of the early Norwich newspapers, which appear to have been published but have not survived. In addition there was at least one other short-lived Norwich newspaper not mentioned by Wiles (see Trevor Fawcett, 'Early Norwich newspapers', *Notes and Queries* (1972), pp.363-5.

⁷⁴ David Stoker, 'Printing at the Red Well: an early Norwich press through the eyes of contemporaries' in *The mighty engine: the printing press at work*, edited by Peter Isaac and Barry McKay, (Winchester, 2000), pp.29-38.

⁷⁵ David Stoker, 'The establishment of printing in Norwich: causes and effects 1660-1760', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 7, (1977), pp.94-111.

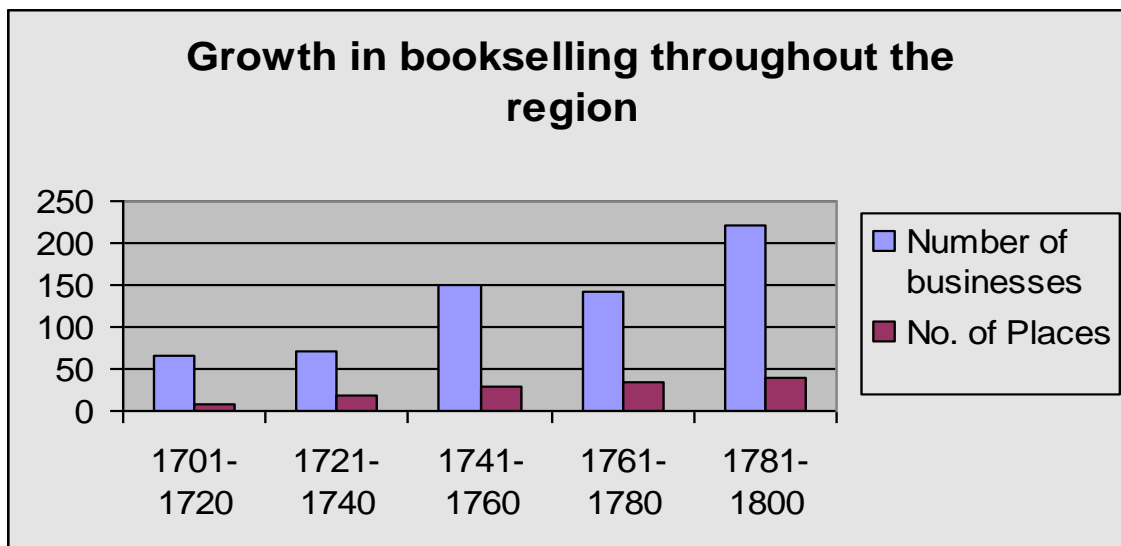
⁷⁶ For example, they printed Edward (Ned) Ward, *A satyr against wine*, (Bury St. Edmunds, c.1712).

⁷⁷ Wiles, *Freshest advices*, Appendix C.

1740. His printing activities are known only because of the survival of one or two minor publications and some playbills.⁷⁸ Printing had spread, to Wisbech in Cambridgeshire by 1770, and Woodbridge in Suffolk by 1773.⁷⁹ Great Yarmouth, due to its proximity to Norwich was relatively late to have its first commercial press in the late 1770s when the Norwich printer John March set up a press in King's Street, followed soon afterwards by another Norwich printer William Payne.⁸⁰ By 1780 printing had spread to thirteen towns in the region. By the end of the century this number had doubled as commercial printing also spread into the smaller market towns during the last two decades of the century.

The growth of Bookselling in East Anglia

The numbers of booksellers recorded on the *British Book Trade Index* indicate a four-fold growth in tradesmen throughout the region 1700-1800 is apparent, and the number of towns where booksellers have been recorded increases from nine to forty-four.⁸¹



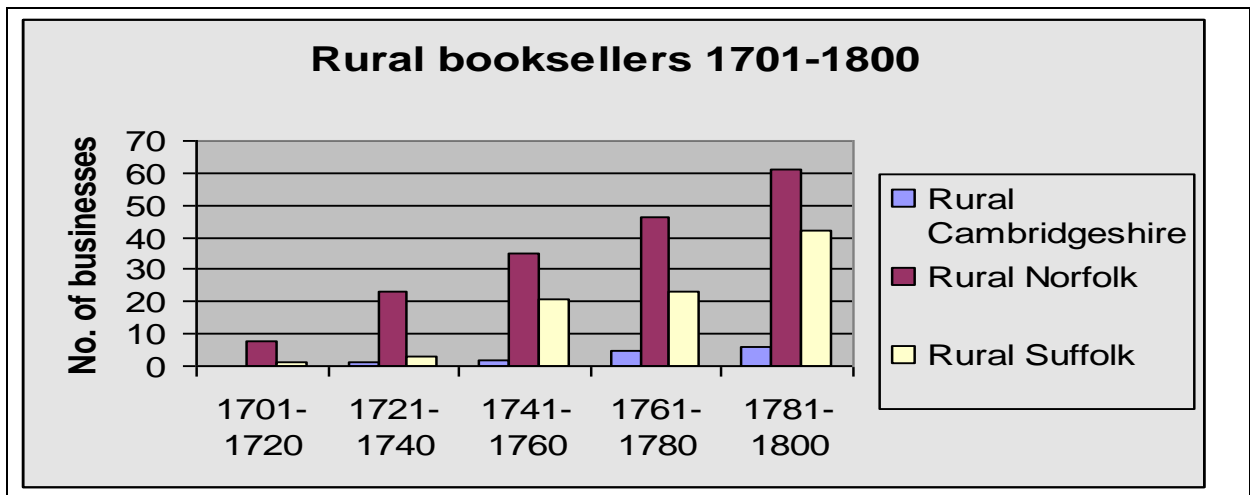
⁷⁸ See David Stoker, 'The early booksellers and printers of Kings Lynn', in *Studies in the provincial book trade of England, Scotland, and Wales before 1900: papers presented to the British Book Trade Index Seventh Annual Seminar, Aberystwyth, 1989*, edited D. Stoker, (Aberystwyth, 1990), pp.76-105. There had also been a private press set up in the Norfolk village of Fersfield in 1736, by the historian Francis Blomefield. See the introduction to David Stoker (ed.) *The Correspondence of the Reverend Francis Blomefield*, (Norwich, 1992).

⁷⁹ BBTI.

⁸⁰ Frank Farrell, *Yarmouth printing and printers*, (Yarmouth, 1910), p.9. Payne is not noticed by Farrell, but he printed Thomas Howe, *Virtue and patriotism founded on religion*, (Yarmouth, 1780) ESTC T94143. These were the first commercial presses. There had previously been a private printing venture in the town by the antiquary John Ives about 1772 (*ibid.*, pp.7-9)..

⁸¹ Some caution needs to be applied when using statistics generated from a collaborative and as yet incomplete databases such as the BBTI. For a discussion on its potential use, see John Hinks and Maureen

A closer examination of these figures shows two different aspects to this growth. The numbers of recorded bookselling businesses in the “county towns” remained fairly stable after about 1720s with each of the larger towns and cities able to support a finite number, of tradesmen. In the market towns of the three counties there was a pattern of steady growth.



Country Bookselling

After the 1720s there begins to be concrete evidence of a new phenomenon, the country bookseller situated in one of the many market towns in the region. The meagre evidence of their existence or activities might come from a number of sources including newspaper advertisements, imprints, prospectuses, subscription lists, or later directory entries.

However, care need to be taken in assuming that all such names are professional members of the book trade as sometimes an author would recruit his friends and acquaintances in the countryside to help distribute a work. For example, the historian Francis Blomefield made use of a combination of the established book trade, itinerant hawkers, and brother clergymen to distribute the printed parts of his history throughout the region.⁸²

Bell, 'The Book Trade in English Provincial Towns, 1700-1850: an evaluation of evidence from the British Book Trade Index', *Publishing History*, 57 (2005), pp. 53-112.

⁸² See the introduction to David Stoker (ed.) *The Correspondence of the Reverend Francis Blomefield*, (Bibliographical Society, 1992), pp. 50-54.

Accounts of notable trials in the region can be useful publications for identifying country booksellers as these were popular publications and the booksellers would be anxious to be named as distributor in their vicinity. Thus *The trial of John Shilling, for the wilful murder of Mr. John Raven, of Burnham Westgate, carrier*, held at Thetford in 1786, was printed in Bury St Edmunds, but named individual booksellers in Norwich, Dereham, Swaffham, Lynn, Docking, and Fakenham.⁸³ Others might make some sweeping statement such as “the booksellers of Norwich, Cambridge, Lynn, Wisbech, Yarmouth, Downham, Ipswich, and the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk in general”.⁸⁴

Such country booksellers as there were, would have almost certainly been following other trades at the same time. Thus William Gilbert of Halesworth, who advertised his ‘old established’ business the *Ipswich Journal* in 1804 as ‘Bookseller, bookbinder, stationer, cutler, ironmonger, and brazier’, and. Richard Leatherdale of Hadleigh, who died aged 70 in 1804 was described as ‘a bookseller, stationer, linen wollen draper’.⁸⁵, William Page, of Holt, is listed as ‘Bookseller, stationer, hairdresser, and perfumer’ in *Bailey’s British directory*; for 1784 and as ‘bookseller, toyman and ironmonger’ in John Pendred’s *London and Country Printers, Booksellers and Stationers Vade Mecum* of 1785. In addition to the above, a brief survey of the secondary trades undertaken by men describing themselves as booksellers in the region includes the trades of: newspaper agent, collector of stamp duties, toyman, hardware, grocer, draper school teacher, and also, from the 1780s, printers. Towards the end of the 18th century a few country booksellers might also run circulating libraries. Thus a trade card in the John Johnson Collection refers to J. Erratt, of Holt, “Bookseller, stationer, printer, bookbinder, proprietor of Erratt's Circulating Library, hardware and glassman”. Country booksellers might also become involved in the distribution of goods. Thus when John Fenn was organising with his London publisher to be able to correct the proofs of his first volume of the ‘Paston Letters’ in 1786 he requested that they be included in the weekly parcels

⁸³ *The trial of John Shilling*, (Bury St. Edmund’s, [1786]).

⁸⁴ *The trial of Joseph Wakefield and Henry Smith ... At the Lent assizes 1788, ...at Thetford*, [Bury St Edmunds, 1788?].

⁸⁵ Copsey, *Book distribution and printing in Suffolk*, 53, and 69.

sent to his local bookseller, William Barker of Dereham, by his London correspondents, Messrs Sawbridge and Law.⁸⁶

William Barker is an interesting example of a new generation of country bookseller in the final decades of the 18th century. He served an apprenticeship with Martin Booth, bookseller of Norwich, and his name is first found as a trader on the imprint of one of Booth's catalogues in July 1777.⁸⁷ He opened a new shop in the Market Place of East Dereham in January 1778 and became local agent for the *Norwich Mercury*.⁸⁸ Around 1790, Barker he acquired a press and also became a jobbing printer.⁸⁹ The business was later continued by his son until at least 1817.

On several occasions part-time bookselling might be conducted in a market down by a tradesmen from a larger town in the vicinity. Thus David Samuel, bookseller, stationer, and bookbinder in the High Street of King's Lynn during the 1730s, appears to have maintained a market stall and some form of lockup in the nearby town of Swaffham on Saturdays, which was the local market day. (Another King's Lynn bookseller William Whittingham continued the same practice in Fakenham and Downham Market during the 1780s.) David Samuel's business is of interest because there was an unusually detailed inventory of his stock taken at the time of death in 1739 listing almost every item he had in stock.⁹⁰ The inventory appears to be arranged according to how the stock was kept in his shops, and the second part lists the range of stock he held at Swaffham. This included about 600 titles, almost all recent publications and in formats of octavo or smaller. There was also a basic stock of stationery items, shop books, paper, quill pens, spectacles etc. In addition there were also various unspecified bundles of pamphlets, primers, engravings, as well as a reference to '14 dozen Chapman', which presumably refers to chap books.

⁸⁶ David Stoker, 'Innumerable letters of good consequence in history': the discovery and first publication of the Paston Letters' *The Library*, 6th series, 17, (1995), 107-155, 129.

⁸⁷ Martin Booth, *A catalogue of a large and valuable collection of books, both antient and modern, in all arts, languages, and sciences, and in every class of modern polite literature*, (1777).

⁸⁸ *Norwich Mercury* 6 June 1778.

⁸⁹ William Cowper, *An hymn, written by William Cowper, Esq. to be sung after the sermon for the benefit of the children of the Sunday-schools*. (Dereham, [1790?]).

⁹⁰ Norfolk Record Office, Norwich Archdeacon's Court Inventories, 1739, no. 8. Reproduced in Stoker, 'The early booksellers and printers of Kings Lynn', 90-105.

The decline of the Fairs

As mentioned above, the growth of established book trading and its spread into the countryside appears to have been matched by the beginnings of a decline in other forms of trading. In East Anglia, this is most apparent by the decline of the two great fairs as trading events and their transformation into largely social and leisure events. These changes were chronicled by Charles Caraccioli in his *An historical account of Sturbridge, Bury, and the most famous fairs in Europe and America*, published in the early 1770s, at a time when the extent of the changes had become apparent, but there were still a few who might remember Bury and Stourbridge Fairs in their heyday.⁹¹ According to Caraccioli, Bury Fair, had then been decreasing in size for forty years, and had “become rather a Place of Amusement than a temporary Mart, as most of the Merchandises now brought thither are chiefly Articles of Luxury and Curiosity”.⁹² His account stressed the significance of the assemblies, concerts, theatre performances and book auctions, which had of course featured in the seventeenth century, but which were now the centre of attraction.

Likewise, Caraccioli noted that Stourbridge Fair had been declining for twenty years and had been abandoned by booksellers. He offered a series of economic reasons for its decline.

A heavy Load of Taxes entailed upon People ever since the last War, the extortionate Price of Provisions, the easy Communication with all commercial Cities and Manufacturing Towns, the great Increase of Land Carriages, the Navigable Canals lately cut, and the Number of Riders from the Capital and other trading Places, who take Orders for all Kinds of Merchandise all over the Kingdom, have ruined all the Fairs.⁹³

Yet in spite of Caraccioli’s pessimism for the economic future of the Fair, it would continue to thrive as a social occasion for a further century and a half.⁹⁴ In the Burney

⁹¹ Caraccioli, *An historical account of Sturbridge, Bury, and the most famous fairs in Europe and America*; (Cambridge, [1773?]).

⁹² *Ibid*, p.16.

⁹³ *Ibid*, p.38.

⁹⁴ See Tania McIntosh, *The decline of Stourbridge fair, 1770-1914*, (Leicester, 1998). Bury Fair likewise survived as a Fun Fair into the twentieth century.

Collection there are several volumes of printed playbills from East Anglian theatres from the 1780s, which provide evidence of the significance of both fairs as social events.⁹⁵ For example, on 30 September [1782?] an unnamed company performed at the Stourbridge Theatre ‘A tragedy called the Fair Penitent’. At the end of the play there was a comic dance entitled ‘The Drunken Swiss’, a new pantomime entertainment ‘Harlequin’s Trip to Stirbitch-Fair’, and at the end of the pantomime the audience were given ‘A Perspective View of Stirbitch fair’. A fortnight’s later (17 October) ‘His Majesty’s Servants from the Theatre Royal Norwich’ performed ‘A tragedy called the Roman Father’ at Bury St Edmund’s. At the end of the second act there was a ‘Comic Dance called The Drunken Swiss’, a new pantomime, ‘Harlequin’s Trip to Bury-Fair’ followed by ‘A Perspective View of Bury-fair’.

18th century book auctions

The death of the London auctioneer Edward Millington in 1703, seems to have encouraged provincial booksellers in the region to embark upon this form of trading. By November 1704 Thomas Goddard, a young bookseller in Norwich issued the first of a series catalogues,⁹⁶ Goddard appears to have modelled himself on Millington, whom he had seen in action in the city during the 1690s. In his second (1705) catalogue he wrote a lofty address “To the Most Curious of the Inhabitants of the City of Norwich”.

Gentlemen, &c. I Here present you with a Catalogue of Books which I intend to dispose of by Auction, which should I commend, you’d say ‘tis Interest, so I shall submit it to your determination, leaving the Catalogue to speak for itself. Only this must be Allowed, that he who most Undervalues them, does least Understand them.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ British Library 937.f.2, 4 vols. (1780-88).

⁹⁶ *A catalogue of books of the Reverend Mr Hannott. Which are to be sold by auction, being the 20th Nov., by T. Goddard* (Norwich, 1704).

⁹⁷ *A catalogue of books both ancient and modern.... Which will be sold by auction, ... on Monday the 31th [sic] of December instant, ... By Thomas Goddard of Norwich, book-seller. ...*(Norwich, 1705).

By 1708 Goddard had become sufficiently renowned in the city to become the subject of a satirical poem by one of his rivals,⁹⁸ and a decade later he was also auctioning other products in addition to his regular book auctions.⁹⁹

Booksellers from outside the region clearly saw East Anglia as an important potential market for travelling book auctions. Francis Hubbert (also known as Hubbard) from London organised two auctions at King's Lynn in 1713 and 1717 respectively¹⁰⁰ and an unnamed bookseller advertised an auction of books at the Kings-Head Inn in Beccles, in 1710.¹⁰¹ In 1720 Henry Wilson from Boston in Lincolnshire brought a collection of "choice books in most faculties", one third of them new books, to auction at the Town-Chamber on the Key in Great Yarmouth.¹⁰² However, the best location for book auctions was the city of Norwich, and particularly during one of the Assize Weeks when it was full of the gentry from the surrounding area. These had been the sole preserve of Thomas Goddard for the previous decade and a half.

In November 1721 Henry Wilson brought a similar collection of books from London, to be sold at "Mr Holland's the Hatter in the Close in Norwich".¹⁰³ Goddard had already recently faced competition from his own former apprentice William Chase, who had held his own auction during the summer Assize Week,¹⁰⁴ He was now threatened with the loss of another of his most profitable annual enterprises. He attacked the interloper in the local press and organised his own auction at his "Paper Warehouse" in the basement of the Guildhall in Norwich Market Place.¹⁰⁵ For the next two years Goddard and Chase were left alone to enjoy their duopoly. Two years later there was a further attempt at opening

⁹⁸ *The auctioneer, a poem. By Mpqr Dkbyq, the Man in the Moon*, (Norwich, 1708).

⁹⁹ 'A catalogue of an auction of cloths etc' to be had at Mr Tho. Goddards booksellers' was advertised in the *Norwich Gazette* 532, 19 January 1717.

¹⁰⁰ *A catalogue of choice books in Greek, Latin, and English. Both ancient and modern, ... Which will be sold by auction, ... in Lynn-Regis in the county of Norfolk, on Monday the 9th of February, 1712/3, ... By Francis Hubbert (of London) bookseller*, (London, 1713) and *Bibliotheca Willisiana, &c. being the libraries of the learned Sir Thomas Willis, Knt. ... which will be sold by auction at Lynn Mart, on Friday the 7th of February. By Francis Hubbert (of London) bookseller*. (London, 1717).

¹⁰¹ *Norwich Gazette* 180, 18 March 1710.

¹⁰² *A catalogue of choice books ... to be sold by Auction, or who bids most, at the Town-Chamber on the Key in Great Yarmouth*, (Norwich, 1720)..

¹⁰³ *Norwich Gazette* 787, 4 November 1721.

¹⁰⁴ *Bibliotheca miscellanea: or a catalogue of choice books.... Which will be sold by auction, ... during the ... assizes ... Monday the 31st of July, at the Guild-Hall, ... by W. Chase*, (Norwich, 1721).

¹⁰⁵ *Norwich Gazette* 788, 11 November 1721.

up Norwich auctions to new traders, when the London bookseller Edmund Curll joined forces with the Norwich bookseller James Carlos to hold a sale during the November Assizes.¹⁰⁶ Goddard and Chase therefore agreed to combine their resources and in future hold joint auctions which would overshadow any competition.¹⁰⁷ By 1726 they were promising their customers

above all, to divert and entertain our Friends, it will be in Part an Auction, and in Part an Oratory; the latter Part if we can't perform to the Satisfaction of our Customers, we'll endeavour to procure one that can: The whole Performance shall be (as Mr. Browne has intitled his Works) both serious and comical, and we shall for every Night have a different Subject.¹⁰⁸

The subject of the oratory on 19 November was “the Antediluvian World; the Flood, and the Alterations this Terraqueous Globe suffer'd thereby”, and the following week was “the noble Appendage of the Earth, the Atmosphere, with something about Meteors”.¹⁰⁹

A final attempt at dislodging Chase and Goddard came in April 1730 when the London bookseller John Oswald, and the auctioneer John Dansken, rented one of the upper rooms in the Norwich Guildhall for a fortnight during Assize Week to hold a massive book auction. As soon as they knew of the plans, the two Norwich tradesmen inserted and advertisement in Chase's newspaper.

Whereas we have received information of a foreigner designing to sell books by auction in this City. This is to acquaint our fellow citizens & friends, (who we hope will discourage all Foreign interlopers) That we will, at the same time he begins, open our Auction & Oratory at the Guildhall Warehouse in the Market, with a good collection of valuable books: of which, from time to time notice shall be given in this paper. T. Goddard W. Chase.¹¹⁰

Thus in April 1730 there were two rival book auctions taking place on different floors of the Norwich Guildhall. Their plan seems to have succeed for the following week Oswald and Dansken were advertising that "if better incouragement be not given the sale will end on Tuesday night" and a week later the sale was advertised as having moved to

¹⁰⁶ *Norwich Gazette* 945, 14 November 1724.

¹⁰⁷ *A catalogue of books, both antient and modern, ... which, ... will be sold by auction, at the Guild-hall Warehouse ... on Monday the 6th of December ... by T. Goddard, and W. Chase.* (Norwich, 1725).

¹⁰⁸ *Norwich Gazette*, 1048, 5 November 1726.

¹⁰⁹ *Norwich Gazette*, 1050 and 1051, 19 and 26 November 1726.

¹¹⁰ *Norwich Mercury* 28 March 1730.

Bungay.¹¹¹ Both William Chase and Thomas Goddard were to die as wealthy men, in 1742 and 1750 respectively, largely as a result of the wide range of their bookselling activities.¹¹²

By the 1740s book auctions were no longer merely a feature of Fairs and Assize Weeks and were appearing throughout the region, particularly following the death of a local book collector.¹¹³ The Cambridge bookseller William Thurlbourn organised a series of auctions in the town between 1742 and 1760, beginning with a sale of duplicates from the Royal Library at Cambridge, after 1748 his auctions were in association with another Cambridge bookseller, Thomas Merrill.¹¹⁴ A decade later book auctions were being held in the larger towns and some market towns. John Shave of Ipswich held an auction at Sudbury, in 1760, Henry Keymer held another at Dereham in 1762, and William Eaton yet another at Yarmouth in 1763.¹¹⁵ Meanwhile Joseph Finley of Bury was advertising a collection of books for sale at the Fair in 1755.¹¹⁶ However the emerging auction houses in London were always on the look out for the real treasures. Thus following the death of the antiquary Thomas Martin of Palgrave Suffolk in 1771, his pictures and coins were auctioned locally, and his huge collection of printed books was purchased by the Norwich booksellers Martin Booth and John Berry, who disposed of them in a catalogue sale. Yet his priceless collection of manuscripts was taken up to London where it was auctioned in two sales by Baker and Leigh.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ *Norwich Gazette* 1227 and 1228, 11 and 18 April 1730.

¹¹² Stoker 'The Norwich book trades before 1800', pp.90-1 and 103-4. For further details about William Chase's career and that of his son as auctioneers and booksellers see David Stoker, 'Prosperity and success in the English provincial book trade during the eighteenth century', *Publishing History*, XXX, (1991), pp. 1-58, pp.35-7.

¹¹³ For example *A catalogue of the remaining part of the library of the Reverend Dr. Andrew Snape, ... and the entire library of the Rev. Mr. Henry Brearey, ... to be sold by auction, Monday Nov. 7th* (Cambridge, 1743), or *A catalogue of the library of the Rev'd Thomas Everson ... to be sold at the Bell Inn Thetford*, (Cambridge, 1749).

¹¹⁴ A number of Thurlbourn and Merrill's catalogues between 1742 and 1761 are recorded in *ESTC*.

¹¹⁵ *Ipswich Journal* 18 October 1760, *Norwich Mercury* 29 January 1762, and *Norwich Mercury* 3 December 1763.

¹¹⁶ *Ipswich Journal* 4 October 1755.

¹¹⁷ David Stoker, 'The ill-gotten library of 'Honest Tom' Martin', in *Property of a Gentleman: the formation, organization and dispersal of the private library 1620-1920*, edited by Robin Myers and Michael Harris, (Winchester, 1991), pp. 91-112, p.105 and n. 52.

During the 1760s and 1770s the range of products appearing at East Anglian auctions had grown enormously to include household effects, pictures, land, houses, ships, horses, wine and the stock of bankrupts. Catalogues might be available from a host of Inns and tradesmen throughout the region.¹¹⁸ Some established booksellers even abandoned their original trade to specialise as full-time auctioneers, such as Jonathan Gleed of Norwich. But it could be risky to be too reliant upon an emerging trade such as auctioneering, and Gleed went bankrupt in 1766.¹¹⁹ The trade of auctioneer had now emerged independently of bookselling. Some auctioneers such as William Seamen, who sold a number of ships in Yarmouth circa 1783-1785, clearly had no connection with the book trade.¹²⁰

Some East Anglian booksellers however preferred to buy up the libraries of book collectors and then sell them by means of priced catalogues. William Thurlbourn of Cambridge published two such catalogues in 1728,¹²¹ and the Norwich booksellers followed suit soon afterwards. By the mid 1730s and for the remainder of the century, such catalogue sales were more popular than book auctions, as a means of selling second-hand books, and their frequency and scale increased markedly during the 1760s.¹²² The Norwich bookseller Martin Booth's catalogue of 1777 contained more than 7,500 titles, as well as coins and medals, and that advertised by the bookseller Christopher Berry in 1794 claimed to include 30,000 volumes.¹²³

The itinerant book trades in the 18th century

The spread of bookselling into the market towns, and the growth of book auctions and catalogue sales in the major East Anglian centres demonstrate the growing strength of the established book trade, catering to a more highly educated and discerning clientele. Yet

¹¹⁸ For example, see *A catalogue of the genuine, modern, and elegant household furniture, and other effects, belonging to Francis Laprimaudaye, Esq. at Drinkston, within eight miles of Bury*, (Norwich, 1771).

¹¹⁹ Stoker 'The Norwich book trades before 1800', 103.

¹²⁰ A series of Seaman's catalogues are recorded in ESTC.

¹²¹ *Bibliotheca Banesiana; or, a catalogue of the library of the late Reverend Mr. Matthew Banes, of Fen-Ditton in Cambridgeshire, ... To be sold, on Monday the 12th day of February, 1727-8. ... By William Thurlbourn, bookseller in Cambridge. ...* [London?, 1728], *A catalogue of a curious and valuable collection of books in most languages and faculties,...* [Cambridge], [1728], and

¹²² Trevor Fawcett, 'Eighteenth century Norfolk booksellers: a survey and register' *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, VI, (1972), pp.1-18, pp.6-7.

¹²³ *A catalogue of a large and valuable collection of books*, (Norwich, 1777), and *Norwich Mercury* 8 March 1794.

the itinerant book trades did not die out overnight and they continued to supply the needs of less sophisticated readers.

There is plenty of evidence, both in surviving publications and in newspaper advertisements, of small, often sensational, and undoubtedly popular news publications produced by local printers for sale by both the established and itinerant trades. The staple diet of these was disasters – such as a fire at a puppet show at Burwell in Cambridgeshire; freaks - such as “the merry facetious dwarf of Botesdale”; monstrous births – an account of the famous rabbit woman of Godalming was printed in Ipswich; and, of course, there were periodic accounts of bloody crimes - such as that of the murder Robert Boon of Great Yarmouth.¹²⁴

The one area where there are many contemporary references to pedlars selling publications was at the scene of public executions, which always drew large crowds from miles around. On several occasions the reports of these served events were an opportunity to air disputes between rival printers. A dispute between the Norwich printers Henry Crossgrove and William Chase relating to the accuracy of latter’s broadside sold at the execution of William Morris in September 1734 was previously described by the present author.¹²⁵ The following August the dispute between the two printers flared up once again, when Crossgrove declared:

It is generally expected that Ward and Mann, the Two Malefactors condemned here the last Assizes, will be Executed this Day ...: They are Two wicked and ignorant poor Wretches, whose ages together can't make 43; they own the Facts they are to suffer for, and they have been very idle wicked Lads; and if any Papers should be published to catch the Penny, under Title of their Dying-Speeches and Confessions, (as was done last Year by Richard Morris, tho' he solemnly declared

¹²⁴ *A narrative of the sudden and surprizing fire which happen'd at the puppet-show at Burwell, in Cambridgeshire; on the 8th of September, 1727.* (Bury St. Edmunds, [1727]), *The Suffolk wonder: or, the pleasant, facetious, and merry dwarf of Bottesdale.* (Ipswich?, 1755), *The wonder of wonders: or, a true and perfect narrative of a woman near Guildford in Surrey, who was delivered lately of seventeen rabbets, and three legs of a tabby cat, ...* (Ipswich, 1726), *An account of Mr. Boon's confession: together with the last passages of his life. To which is added, a letter to a friend, inlightning the whole matter.* (Norwich, 1704).

¹²⁵ Stoker, 'Prosperity and success', pp.38-40.

with his last Breath at the Gallows that he had made None) I do assure the Publick they will not be of my Printing, and that I will never be any ways concerned in such Grub-Street Undertakings.¹²⁶

On the same day Chase advertised just such a publication in his own newspaper.

This Day will be publish'd, and sold by W. Chase at One Penny each, The True Confessions of John Mann, and Timothy Ward: taken on Friday August the 15th, from their own Mouths, and sign'd by themselves, before the following Witnesses: George Gynne, Gaoler; John Mills, Carpenter; Richard Jarves; Nat. Rickard; and Hen. Young. City Jail, Friday Night 8 o'clock. We John Mann and Timothy Ward, do declare to all Persons present, that Mr Chase has the True and only True Copy of our Confession. John Mann and Timothy Ward.¹²⁷

Despite Chase's guarantees of the veracity of his publication, Crossgrove inevitably poured scorn on it the following week.:

On the 16th Instant, between One and Two in the Afternoon, John Ward and Timothy Mann, the Two young Fellows mentioned in my former, were Hang'd on a Gallows erected in the Castel-Ditches: and immediately after they were turned off, Papers called their Dying-Speeches and Confessions were cry'd about; in which were several Robberies mentioned, that never were committed.¹²⁸

Such exchanges were not uncommon during the middle years of the century and show the local printers exploiting any means of reaching a mass market. For many years Chase and his successors would also print a list of the prisoners to be tried before each of the three Assizes, and the crimes of which they were accused. This was ostensibly for the use of the authorities, but would also be advertised for sale to the visiting gentry who might wish to attend the trials.¹²⁹ Yet sensational news publications and execution broadsides

¹²⁶ *Norwich Gazette* 1506, 16 August 1735.

¹²⁷ *Norwich Mercury* 16 August 1735.

¹²⁸ *Norwich Gazette* 1507, 23 August 1735.

¹²⁹ For example, *A Calendar or, list of the several prisoners to be tryed at the Assizes to be held for the said County of Norfolk, at the Guild-Hall in the City of Norwich, on Saturday the 30th of July, 1748; the Time of*

were an exception rather than the rule, and there must also have been a staple diet of small cheap publications for sale to the less educated readers.

Chapbooks are notoriously difficult to define in a sufficiently inclusive manner, but were usually small books (both in terms of their printed format and the fact that they would be printed on one or at most two sheets) which were sold without bindings by chapmen and other itinerant traders. There are surprisingly few surviving references to the sale of these books in the region after about 1720. That the trade did exist at the beginning of the century may be inferred from some of the early advertisements of provincial printers such as Henry Crossgrove or Elizabeth Burges cited above. Similarly when John Bagnall set up his press in Ipswich in 1720 one of the first things he did was to address “All booksellers, chapmen, hawkers, peddlers, or others” with advertisements for “all sorts of little books, songs, large and small pictures ... by wholesale or retail”.¹³⁰ However, further evidence for the sale of this type of literature in East Anglia after this date, other than the brief reference in David Samuel’s inventory, is very sparse indeed. This is surprising since the middle years of the eighteenth century are believed to have been the hey-day of the chapbook, as the format began to replace the traditional black letter ballad as the principal vehicle for the dissemination of popular literature. This absence of documentary evidence also corresponds with Margaret Spufford’s findings that there were noticeably fewer pedlars’ licences issued for the region during the 1690s.¹³¹

The production of these small books was initially centred in London, but with the spread of printing into the English provinces, Victor Neuberg noted their production in Newcastle, York, Birmingham, Northampton, Sheffield, Worcester, Tewkesbury, Leicester, Banbury, Nottingham, Carlisle, Coventry, Manchester, Durham, Whitehaven, and Bath, and Stockton – but not one town in East Anglia.¹³² The author of this paper has never seen an example of a chapbook either printed in East Anglia, or with the name of a distributor from the region, there are apparently no examples in the extensive chapbook

their Comitment, their several Crimes, and by who Norwich: Printed by M Chase, by Order of the Gaoler. Relatively few of these calendars have survived but they feature in dozens of newspaper advertisements

¹³⁰ Copsey, *Book distribution and printing in Suffolk*, p.24.

¹³¹ Spufford, *Small books and pleasant histories*, pp.118-9.

¹³² Victor Neuberg, ‘The Diceys and the chapbook trade’, *The Library: Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, 5th series, (1969), 219-231, pp.225-6.

collections at Harvard University,¹³³ or in the Victoria and Albert Museum. This does not mean that they never existed, but the notable lack of survival from one region requires further investigation. One of the reasons why the chapbook trade was so healthy in the lowlands of Scotland, continuing well into the nineteenth century may have been because there were so few newspapers in this region. It may be that the opposite situation applied in East Anglia?

The one area where there is a range of evidence concerning the workings of the itinerant book trade is in the area of newspaper distribution. Those concerned are usually referred to as hawkers, and no doubt covered considerable distances each week. I suspect these men may have been in existence prior to the arrival of the newspapers, for the distribution of other products and that the proprietors therefore made use of existing networks. In addition to delivering the newspapers, they would also act as agents for the proprietor to collect advertisements, or sell other products published by them. Thus John Crouse and William Stevenson advertised their *Norfolk and Norwich Memorandum Book* as available both from their Medicinal Warehouse in Norwich Market Place and also from the hawkers who delivered the *Norfolk Chronicle*.¹³⁴ Similarly, the imprint of the rival *Chase's memorandum book* for 1781 indicates that it was sold by eighteen named booksellers in nine East Anglian towns, as well as "the Distributors of the Norwich Mercury".¹³⁵

These hawkers may also have acted as informal letter carriers and miscellaneous delivery men in their own right. There is an interesting series of letters between two sisters, Barbara Kerrich and Elizabeth Postlethwaite, who through marriage found themselves living at opposite end of Norfolk. They were able to maintain a regular correspondence between 1733 and 1751 as both their husbands subscribed to William Chase's *Norwich Mercury*. Thus they each paid the hawkers a small bonus to hand over their letters to one of his colleague. The imminent arrival of Mr Chase's newsman was therefore an excuse

¹³³ *Catalogue of English and American chapbooks and broadside ballads in Harvard College Library* (Detroit, 1968).

¹³⁴ *Crouse and Stevenson's Norwich and Norfolk memorandum-book, for the year [1775-1789]*, (Norwich, 1774-88).

¹³⁵ *Chase's Norwich Memorandum-book, or gentleman and tradesman's daily journal, for the year, 1781*, (Norwich, 1781).

for closing several of the letters. When at one point the proprietor found out about this informal delivery network, the hawker concerned made it abundantly clear that this was one of his perquisites and “that he might carry his papers himself if he discouraged people from sending letters by him”.¹³⁶

There are occasional reports of difficulties between newspaper proprietors and their hawkers. Michael Harris briefly referred to a dispute between the Norwich newspaper printer Henry Crossgrove and a lame newspaper hawker in 1718.¹³⁷ Likewise in April 1749, Crossgrove’s successor Robert Davey found that his hawkers were helping themselves to the half-Sheet of songs given as a free gift with this paper, and warned his readers to ensure they received a copy.¹³⁸

In addition to the chapmen, pedlars, and newspaper hawkers there also appear to have been of itinerant tradesmen involved in the making and sale of publications. For example there are a few surviving examples of items apparently printed by small-scale itinerant printers during the middle years of the 18th century, before printing spread to the market towns. One of these is a bookplate for Charles Kerrich, surgeon and cleric, which was printed in Harlestone in 1742 by Thomas Eldridge a quack doctor, auctioneer, spirit and tobacco merchant, bookseller and printer.¹³⁹ Eldridge usually resided at the "Daffey's Elixir Warehouse, St Lawrence parish Norwich" between 1731 until 1744, where he also refers to his brandy vaults. In 1738 he published *An autbentick history of the antient City of Norwich* and in 1745 a book of medicinal remedies entitled *Incomparable varieties*.¹⁴⁰ Yet he appears to have taken his press on the road, perhaps because he was due to conduct an auction in the town.

Another interesting piece of itinerant printing relates to the execution of Robert Carlton at Diss in 1742. This had been a particularly sensational murder involving the poisoning of

¹³⁶ Nigel Surry, (ed.) *Your affectionate and loving sister: the correspondence of Barbara Kerrich and Elizabeth Postlethwaite*, (Dereham, 2000) pp.114-5.

¹³⁷ Michael Harris, ‘A few shillings for small books; the experiences of a flying stationer in the 18th century’ in Robin Myers and Michael Harris (eds), *Spreading the word: the distribution networks of print 1550-1850*, (Winchester, 1990), pp.83-108, p.86.

¹³⁸ *Norwich Gazette* 23 September 1749.

¹³⁹ This is reproduced in John Blatchly, *Some Suffolk and Norfolk Ex-libris*, (London, 2000), p.25.

¹⁴⁰ Stoker ‘The Norwich book trades before 1800’, p.100.

a young country girl by her fiancée's middle aged homosexual lover, and attracted many thousands of people to the small market town. A small, un-illustrated and crudely printed account of the execution mentions some, but not all of the events organised by the townspeople, seeking to cash in on the huge crowds in the town. The item appears to have been printed on the day of the execution for sale to the crowd, although the nearest presses were twenty miles away in Norwich.¹⁴¹ A third example is a theatre handbill printed at Fakenham in 1763 by P. Godsall. No other press is known in the town until the end of the century. P. Godsall was however listed as one of the actors in the travelling troop, who appear to have had taken their own press. Similarly David Fisher, a comedian, with the Norfolk & Suffolk Company of Comedians, at King's Lynn between 1792 and 1832 later registered a press for use in North Walsham, Wells, Dereham, Swaffham, Thetford, Aylsham, Newmarket, Sudbury, Woodbridge, Eye, Halesworth.¹⁴²

As with the seventeenth century, there were also itinerant bookbinders at work. A letter of introduction from the Revd Fairfax Stillingfleet of Sileham in Suffolk in 1743 introduced Samuel Harper, one of his parishioners, to the book collector Thomas Martin, describing him as:

a very Honest industrious Man with a large Family of Children. He had, from his own Genius & without any Instructions till very lately, made a good Proficiency in the Art of Bookbinding.¹⁴³

Harper appears to have moved around the countryside collecting books rather than keeping a shop. He must have been competent since the recipient Thomas Martin continued to use him for the next decade.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ David Stoker, 'The tailor of Diss: sodomy and murder in a Norfolk market town', *Factotum: Newsletter of the XVIII century STC*, XXXI, (1990), pp.18-21.

¹⁴² BBTI

¹⁴³ NRO MC 1/25.

¹⁴⁴ NRO, NNAS C3/2/4 contains various bills for books bound by Samuel Harper of Syleham between January 1742/3 and July 1753.

Likewise there appear to have been a host of engravers, surveyors, cartographers working in the countryside particularly during the summer months. For example the engraver Francis Hoffman wrote to Francis Blomefield in 1735 saying

I spend the summer at gentlemens seats where I engrave plates, draw plans of estates &c. I come to town oft very late in the winter for gain: though I so passionately love country air that I sacrifice much gain to enjoy a little of it in the country.¹⁴⁵

Hoffman came up to Norfolk to engrave plates in the summer of 1736 but the country air was not so much to his liking as he ran away after a few weeks taking with him all the work he had completed up to that point.

Thus it is clear, the even in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, the book trades in East Anglia were by no means restricted to the established tradesmen residing in the larger towns of the region. Printed matter in many different formats was being produced and distributed to readers through a variety of different channels and involving many different tradesmen.

Conclusion

It has been the object of this paper to outline some of the different ways in which reading matter was sold in East Anglia, and the changes that took place, particularly during the eighteenth century. By 1780 printed matter in different formats was far more widely available throughout East Anglia than at the beginning of the century. The established book trades in particular appear to have been thriving and adapting to new economic opportunities as they arose. The itinerant trades were still an important part of the overall picture but relatively less significant than they had been a century before. The overall growth in the eighteenth century was partly a result of changes to the economy of the whole country and also partly to the local situation in the region. The trades in the three

¹⁴⁵ *The Correspondence of the Reverend Francis Blomefield*, 122

counties would continue to expand and prosper until the end of the century and the impact of the Napoleonic Wars.

However, elsewhere in England there were even more fundamental economic changes beginning to take place, which would thereafter see East Anglia lose its pre-eminence and its relative prosperity. The emerging Industrial Revolution was centred on the midlands and the north, so that by the 1801 census Norwich had fallen to seventh place among provincial cities, Ipswich had fallen to thirty seventh and Cambridge to forty-eighth. By the middle of the nineteenth century the region had become an economic backwater.